CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

Please cancel Claims 3 and 10, and amend Claims 1 and 6 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An image forming method using an electrophotographic process, comprising:

an expansion step of expanding image data, which includes halftone dot patterns, at a resolution higher than a resolution performance capability of an output apparatus;

a resolution conversion step of converting high-resolution data, which is the result of expansion in said expansion step, to low-resolution data representing an actual resolution of the output apparatus, ~~by a prescribed low-resolution conversion method~~ by averaging of the high-resolution data using a matrix comprised of a plurality of boxes in which each box, having a size of the low-resolution data, is shifted by half a pixel to one pixel of the high-resolution data, and has weighted coefficients of the averaging corresponding to an area ratio overlapping each pixel of the high-resolution data ; and

an image formation step of forming an image represented by image data using a laser exposure unit,

wherein a laser exposure amount, corresponding to a target halftone value in any one of a plurality of halftone dot patterns, is determined such that each density of the plurality of halftone dot patterns is equal, and wherein each density of the plurality of halftone dot patterns is the same before being resolution-converted in the resolution conversion step and differs from each other after being resolution-converted.

2. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said resolution conversion step includes averaging the high-resolution data using a matrix of a

predetermined size and subjecting the actual resolution of the output apparatus to a resolution conversion.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that will take on a different image formation state by the prescribed low-resolution conversion method despite the fact that an original image pattern is the same, the density of the prescribed pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined in such a manner that the density of the prescribed pattern will be the same before and after image formation.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that is repeated at fixed intervals, the density of the prescribed pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined based upon the measured density in such a manner that a difference in average density will not develop between the prescribed patterns.

6. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus that performs image formation by an electrophotographic process, comprising:

an expansion unit adapted to expand image data, which includes halftone dot patterns, at a resolution higher than a resolution performance capability of an output apparatus;

a resolution conversion unit adapted to convert high-resolution data, which is the result of expansion by said expansion unit, to low-resolution data representing an actual resolution of the output apparatus, ~~by a prescribed low-resolution conversion method~~ by averaging of the high-resolution data using a matrix comprised of a plurality of

boxes in which each box, having a size of the low-resolution data, is shifted by half a pixel to one pixel of the high-resolution data, and has weighted coefficients of the averaging corresponding to an area ratio overlapping each pixel of the high-resolution data; and

an image formation unit adapted to form an image represented by image data using a laser exposure unit,.

wherein a laser exposure amount, corresponding to a target halftone value in any one of a plurality of halftone dot patterns, is determined such that each density of the plurality of halftone dot patterns is equal, and wherein each density of the plurality of halftone dot patterns is the same before being resolution-converted by the resolution conversion unit and differs from each other after being resolution-converted.

7. – 8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said resolution conversion unit averages the high-resolution data using a matrix of a predetermined size and subjects the actual resolution of the output apparatus to a resolution conversion.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that will take on a different image formation state by the prescribed low-resolution conversion method despite the fact that an original image pattern is the same, the density of the prescribed pattern formed is measured, and the laser exposure is determined in such a manner that the density of the prescribed pattern will be the same before and after image formation.

12. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that is repeated at fixed intervals, the density of the prescribed pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined based on the measured density in such a manner that a difference in average density will not develop between the prescribed patterns.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein first, second, third and fourth halftone dot patterns are included in the plurality of halftone dot patterns, and

wherein the laser exposure amount corresponding to the target halftone value is determined based on a first laser exposure amount corresponding to the target halftone value obtained from the first and second halftone dot patterns, and based on a second laser exposure amount corresponding to the target halftone value obtained from the third and fourth halftone dot patterns in a case where the first laser exposure amount differs from the second laser exposure amount.

14. Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein first, second, third and fourth halftone dot patterns are included in the plurality of halftone dot patterns, and

wherein the laser exposure amount corresponding to the target halftone value is determined based on a first laser exposure amount corresponding to the target halftone value obtained from the first and second halftone dot patterns, and based on a second laser exposure amount corresponding to the target halftone value obtained from the third and fourth halftone dot patterns in a case where the first laser exposure amount differs from the second laser exposure amount.